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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 RIYADH 001891

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/09/2027
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PTER](#) [KTFN](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: FOLLOW-UP ON SAUDI "REFORMERS"

REF: A. JEDDAH 00383
[1](#)B. RIYADH 00497

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Michael Gfoeller for reasons 1.4
(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (S//NF) The international media recently published several articles about a ten-page petition addressed to King Abdullah demanding that the SAG release a group of nine "reformers" arrested on February 2-3, 2007 in Jeddah. The articles focused on the legitimate fundraising efforts of certain individuals in the group and conveyed the anger and frustration of the detainees' families over the treatment of those arrested (ref A). At the time of their arrest, the group was formally charged with illegally collecting donations and distributing them to unspecified "suspicious" persons. While there is very little evidence available in the public realm that substantiates these claims, Post's Interagency Terrorism Finance Task Force has learned that the SAG's internal security service (Mabahith), through an ongoing investigation, has linked some of the individuals in question to nefarious activities that warrant further exploration.

[1](#)2. (U) The petition has been signed by liberal writers and academics, along with both Sunni and Shi'a Muslim activists. The authors expect to collect at least 400 signatures before it is formally submitted to the King on the first day of Ramadan according to articles in the press. As of September 3, a Saudi reformist website tracking the petition indicated that the authors had collected 106 signatures. The activists sent a copy of the petition to the Ministry of Justice, Shura Council, Human Rights Commission, and National Society for Human Rights, and also posted it on an Islamic website. The petition questions Ministry of Interior (MOI) allegations that the nine individuals were involved in activities supporting terrorism and/or Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq. It explains that "most" of the suspects have taken part in drafting or been signatories of fourteen previous petitions and statements from 1991 to 2007 advocating human rights, democracy, the rule of law, and separation of powers in government. The petition asks the SAG to either release the nine detainees or try them in a court of law now that the six-month deadline for holding suspects without a trial has passed. It further requests that the Investigation Board not be affiliated with the MOI, and that it report directly to the Council of Ministers in order to ensure a fair trial.

[1](#)3. (C) Press reports highlighted the nine individuals' backgrounds in human rights and democracy, and three of the

suspects were said to have signed a petition calling for an Islamic-based constitutional monarchy the day before their arrest in February. Others are alleged to have been considering the formation of an Islamic political party in Saudi Arabia prior to their arrest. Articles also focused on the petition's claims that these detentions were a ploy by the MOI to discredit proponents of a civil society. Adding to public interest was an article by one independent news organization claiming that three of the detainees started a hunger strike in mid-August. (NOTE: Post has been unable to substantiate this claim. END NOTE.)

¶4. (U) The nine "reformers" named in the petition are:

- ¶1. Sa'ud Hassan Mukhtar Al-Hashimi
- ¶2. 'Abd al-'Aziz Sulayman al-Khariji
- ¶3. Sulayman Ibrahim Salih al-Rashudi
- ¶4. Musa Muhammad al-Qarni
- ¶5. 'Isam Hassan Zayn al-Basrawi
- ¶6. 'Abd al-Rahman 'Abdallah Al-Shumayri
- ¶7. Sayf al-Din Faysal al-Sharif
- ¶8. Fahd Muhammad Hasan al-Qarshi
- ¶9. 'Abd al-Rahman Sadiq Mu'min Khan

NOTE: A tenth individual, Al-Husayn al-Hasan al-Sadiqi, was also arrested as a part of this group in February 2007. At the time of his arrest, he was serving as Basrawi's personal assistant. He is likely excluded from the petition because he is Moroccan, and not a Saudi citizen.

¶5. (S//NF) COMMENT: Following the arrests in early February 2007 (ref B), the Mabathith launched an in-depth investigation

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into the backgrounds, activities, and associations of these individuals. Their efforts have uncovered compelling evidence linking a number of those arrested to terrorism. The Mabathith has shared some of this material with Post's Interagency Terrorism Finance Task Force. Based on these interactions, the Task Force concurs that there are valid concerns regarding the plans and intentions of some of the individuals in custody. In particular, debriefings of Al-Hashimi have revealed his financial support to Sunni insurgent groups in Iraq -- namely the Jaysh Al-Islami. Other individuals have been linked to known terrorism financiers, or Al-Qa'ida, either through familial or historical ties. Further, the fact that some members of the group were involved in legitimate pro-reform efforts does not preclude them from engaging in terrorist funding activities -- the two are not mutually exclusive in the Saudi context. The SAG has been reluctant to release any incriminating information to the public for fear that doing so could either encumber the investigation or impede the SAG's ability to follow up on leads uncovered during the investigation. Given the sensitivity of this issue, and the evolving nature of the investigation, Post recommends refraining from making any public statements about these events until more information can be obtained. Post will continue to track this issue and engage the SAG to gather further information as it becomes available.

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